

COMMENTARY

THE NEW NAZIS OF GERMANY

The Totalitarians of the Eastern Zone

NORBERT MUHLEN

LET us imagine a German Rip Van Winkle escaping for a day the drumbeat monotone of Nazi boots, and stretching out for a nap along a brook in East Germany's Harz Mountains. He now awakes. Instead of 1936 it is 1951. When he goes down again to his native town, he learns from his old neighbors what great events have happened—how everything has changed.

Since 1936 Hitler's Third Reich has gone down in defeat and disgrace, his home town has been occupied by the Russian army and ruled by the Soviet Military Administration,

IN THEIR quite proper concern over every sign of continuing or resurgent Nazism, leaders of American public opinion have sounded the alarm at the return of individual Nazis to government office or positions in industry and at individual acts and expressions of bigotry in the zones of occupation of the American and other Western powers. But meanwhile, almost unnoticed, across the border in Eastern Germany, totalitarianism has re-risen, fully organized and strongly armed physically and ideologically, ripe for new internal terror and possible external aggression. NORBERT MUHLEN, a close student of German politics, gathered the material for this alarming report in an extended tour of Germany this fall, and this article describes the situation as he found it. He has written for the *Reader's Digest* and other magazines, and has contributed several articles to previous issues of COMMENTARY, the most recent of which were: "German Youth in a Vacuum" in the May 1950 issue and "The Shooting on the Moehlstrasse" in the October 1949 issue.

and now after liberation and peace there is a "German Democratic Republic" presiding over a "new era of peace, progress, and plenty." This the glossy new history books tell him. Yet what do his eyes see? Underneath the thin disguise of new words and uniforms, is not, in reality, the scene amazingly the same?

Hailing a neighbor with a friendly "What's the news?" Herr Van Winkle was greeted with that strange movement invented in the Third Reich and dubbed "the German glance" (*der deutsche Blick*), as a counterpart to the Nazis' "German salute": it consisted of a quick look around to see if any informers were loitering in the vicinity. Walking along the village street, he saw everywhere the cold-faced, black-booted, black-uniformed young men of the SS; the only changes were the color of the necktie, which was now red, and the name of their organization, which was "People's Police." There were the same cocky boys in very abbreviated shorts and open sport shirts, the original tan showing through the blue dye in patches, now calling themselves the "Free German Youth." The Gestapo had ceased to exist, but he learned that its employees had now joined a new fraternity called the *Staatssicherheitsdienst* (State Security Police). He learned further that if any member of this fraternity denounced him as an "enemy of the people," he would be arrested and probably tortured until he admitted a crime; then a "People's Court" would sen-

tence him to prison, if it did not send him to a concentration camp.

At the village inn he found himself seated for a *Gemeinschaftsempfang* (compulsory community radio listening) just as in the old days. And the same voices still seemed to broadcast the same speech in adoration of "the greatest friend of the people, the greatest thinker of all times, the creator of all new life"; denouncing and "unmasking" the enemy, the reactionaries, the Anglo-Saxon imperialists and exploiters, the international gang of money-mad warmongers; promising to all a better life as soon as these foreign criminals and their hidden helpers at home were liquidated by the people and extinguished from the earth. And long lists of names were read of those who, in identical words, pledged their enthusiastic support of this goal; the list ranged from university professors of medicine to housewives to high school students to undertakers.

True, the vocabulary of 1936 seemed slightly altered: bad things were more frequently bourgeois and much less frequently Jewish; good things were "progressive" now rather than German. But a poor, quiet, sleepy man like our Rip Van Winkle could not apply himself to the subtleties of official semantics. And why should he bother? He knew the old game and how to play it, even with a newly colored deck.

WHAT our Rip Van Winkle couldn't know was that the transition from the Nazi regime to the Communist one of East Germany had not been achieved by any mere change-over of labels and leaders. As a matter of fact, it took a hard struggle of almost five years, with great sacrifice of human life and continuous foreign pressure, to establish the new dictatorship over Germans who had just been liberated from dictatorship.

For, after the debacle of the *Fuehrerstaat*, the overwhelming majority of Germans were weary of dictatorial methods and suspicious of dictators' promises. Indeed, the German Communist leaders, most of whom had been living in Moscow, quickly realized they had to reckon with a new and democratic temper when they published, after Hitler's fall in 1945, their first "program of action." This program was strongly anti-dictatorial; it pledged the party to "absolutely unhampered

development of free trade and free private initiative in an economy based on free private property; re-establishment of all democratic rights and civil liberties for all people; a truly democratic, free, and liberal education; absolute freedom of scientific research and of artistic creation. . . ." The platform was signed by Wilhelm Pieck, today president of the German Democratic Republic, and Walter Ulbricht, today deputy premier and powerful secretary-general of the Communist party, both of whom stressed that "*it would be erroneous to enforce the Soviet system upon Germany today . . .*" (italics mine), advocating instead a "parliamentarian republic with democratic rights and civil liberties for all the people."

What then was called by the Communist theoreticians "the party's German way" was in reality the party's carefully conceived German trap. In essence the trap consisted (as it had in Hitler's and Mussolini's first years of power as well as in various of the now completely Sovietized European countries) of a coalition government in which the non-Communist parties would be firmly gripped until devoured. The first elections in what was then the Soviet Occupation Zone were held in 1946. A short while before, the Communists—with the help of the occupation authorities—had forcibly merged the Socialist and the Communist parties into the Socialist Unity party (SED), which was completely Communist-controlled. Only Communist-endorsed candidates of the two "bourgeois" parties were permitted to run for any office; in addition, there appeared on the ticket the candidates of five "new" organizations representing the peasants, women, trade unions, youth, and intellectuals—every one of them a camouflaged "front" obedient to the Communists. Despite these elaborate precautions, the elections failed to give the Communists and their allies a majority.

One year later, in 1947, another election was held. This time many "bourgeois" anti-Communist candidates were arrested before the election, and votes cast for them were declared invalid. The press of the non-Communist parties was throttled; and the whole state machinery was brought to bear on the side of the SED. But the Communist party actually suffered new electoral losses. In East Berlin, it received less than 30 per cent of the total vote.

Two years later, in May 1949, the Communists tried again. This time, the "People's Congress" was to be elected by a completely new and sure-fire method. The Communists prepared in advance a "unity ticket" on which hand-picked candidates of the various parties, as well as of the "independent" organizations, were presented side by side. The voters had simply to fill in "Yes" or "No," and since a good number of the seemingly non-Communist delegates were Communist puppets, victory seemed certain. But only 48 per cent of the voters gave their "Yes"; the majority of the voters either said "No," or purposely invalidated their ticket.

Last October, the balky trap was finally sprung. The single-ticket method was used again for elections to the first People's Parliament of the German Democratic Republic. The Soviet Military Administration which up to then had ruled the country had been formally withdrawn; but the Soviet army remained in full strength. Like the members of the new government itself, the candidates of all parties appearing on the "unity ticket" were appointed by the Communist leadership after being approved by the Russian authorities. To swell the vote, a new party—the National Democratic party—was founded by the Communists to appeal to the unreconstructed Nazis for their full cooperation in the "National Front."

For the first time in five energetic years the Communist scheme succeeded. Breaking the previous totalitarian election record of Hitler, who in 1936 had received 98.81 per cent of the German vote, the Communists announced that 99.71 per cent of the East German electorate had registered "Yes." Intriguingly enough, the Communist-controlled party of ex-Nazis was allotted 7.5 per cent of the vote, while the Communist-controlled Association of the Victims of Nazism received a mere 3.79 per cent.

NOTWITHSTANDING the comfortable notion widespread in the West that a vote under such conditions is "only a farce that can't deceive anybody," such rigged elections have a serious and important function in a dictatorship. They are the test—and a demonstration to the people—of how well a dictatorship is organized. The elections of last October showed that the dictatorship of East Germany finally had, after five years of ef-

fort, attained the ideal of Communist government.

The monopoly of power is firmly in the hands of party leaders who are themselves ruled by Walter Ulbricht, the party's secretary-general, who in turn is ruled by the Soviet leaders in the Kremlin. This monopoly of power is sustained by political organization, by indoctrination, by terror, by control over every bit of communication. Gerhart Eisler, propaganda chief of Communist Germany, last November called this system "a democracy of higher rank," using the exact words that Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels had employed in 1934 to describe the Nazi order.

In the totalitarian state, political status is like a large clothing label worn on the outside—it is obvious and distinctive. In East Germany, there are three main classes. On top stand the members of the state party, the SED, which at present numbers approximately one million members, and is subject to continuous tests and purges. One-third of the party members have been expelled in the last two years, among them many very high-ranking leaders and dignitaries. Prominent among those purged were people who had spent their years of exile from Nazi Germany in the West, or who had friends or relatives in the West with whom they had not completely broken off relations; in addition, there were those guilty of "cosmopolitanism," such as the Thuringian physician who "groveled" before the West by prescribing penicillin for a case of venereal disease, the Halle student of economics who admitted in an interview that he had read several pages by Adam Smith, and the language teacher in a Leipzig school who had used an old copy of the *National Geographic Magazine* in his English course.

Below the party members are the candidates for membership, people who have shown their loyalty but who are felt to need further "political education" and more thoroughgoing political observation before they can be admitted to the leading class.

Then comes the next, and by far the largest, class of the population, the members of "mass organizations." These are the people organized in the Communist-controlled, yet allegedly independent, groups such as the Partisans of Peace, the League of German-Soviet Friendship, the Cultural League for

Germany's Democratic Reconstruction, the trade unions and the consumers' cooperatives, the youth and women's organizations, the Association of the Victims of Nazism, the SED's satellite parties (the ex-Nazis' National Democratic party and the German Peasants' party), and several minor groups. Not to belong to any of these organizations automatically makes a citizen of East Germany highly suspect. That every person is enlisted in one of these groups is a double advantage for the regime. The dictatorship can more easily control its subjects, for the members of mass organizations are continually watched, tested, and investigated. Moreover, many who join such organizations, even under duress, come to experience a sense of complicity, and often try to overcome their feeling of guilt by making excuses for the system.* Forced to ally themselves with the devil, they may either convince themselves that this devil isn't actually so bad, or they may cynically hope that his rule is going to last, so that they themselves will profit from rather than be punished for their alliance with him.

THERE is a fourth "invisible" class made up of those who may be non-political but who are "capitalists," and those who are either actively or passively hostile to the regime. All in this class are regarded by the dictatorship as its enemies. These enemies are prosecuted and convicted by the "People's Courts," where learned jurists are replaced or supplemented by the "People's Judges," who are Communist officials appointed by their party.

The dictatorship has nationalized all agricultural estates, all big industrial concerns, all insurance and banking companies, and all business connected with public opinion—from newspapers to corner news stands—and their former owners have been disposed of quite simply by having them convicted of "economic crimes." While smaller businesses and trade units have not yet been expropriated by law, many of their owners have nonetheless been convicted as "economic criminals": for instance, all the bakers in an East Berlin suburb who one morning sold

their merchandise at prices cheaper than the fixed price, or gave away bread to poor old beggars who turned out to be disguised "economic inspectors," were sentenced to two years in prison as "economic criminals."

The politically conscious enemies range from people who let fall a critical remark about one of the leaders, or refused to listen to a Communist speech at the *Gemeinschaftsempfang*, to such real resisters as, for instance, eight youngsters under twenty in the small town of Guestrow, Mecklenburg, who were recently caught by the People's Police with handbills saying: "We want free elections in Germany." The People's Court in Schwerin convicted them of "endangering the peace, warmongering, and spreading fascist propaganda"; they were sentenced, according to the law, to prison terms ranging from ten to fifteen years. Every day in every newspaper of East Germany, one can read of one or more sentences like this handed out to political enemies. To read a Western paper and lend it to somebody else is the "crime of reviving Nazism"; it is punished with hard labor for five years to life.

The new dictatorship took over from the Nazis the concentration camps of Buchenwald near Weimar, Sachsenhausen near Oranienburg, and Neubrandenburg; in addition, it established nine new concentration camps. In 1950, according to the most conservative accounts, the number of people who had entered these camps surpassed the 200,000 mark; of these, 96,000 died in the camps, while 41,000 were deported to the Soviet Union. Early in 1950, the dictatorship announced with great propaganda fanfare that it had dissolved the camps. A grand total of 29,000 inmates were released; they were either very sick people, or Nazis needed to bolster the new ex-Nazis' National Democratic party; the remaining 34,000 were transferred to new forced labor camps, to the state prison of Waldheim, and to Siberia.

In contrast to the old Nazi concentration camps and also to the camps operated by the MVD inside Russia, the East German concentration camp inmates are almost never worked or tortured to death. Torture is normal only at the preliminary interviews with the secret police, when the arrested men have to admit their guilt and to inculpate others. The method of exterminating the regime's

*See Hannah Arendt's "The Aftermath of Nazi Rule" (COMMENTARY, October 1950), which demonstrates how this mechanism worked under the Nazis, as well as its after-effects.

"enemies" in the East German concentration camps consists in what the Soviet language scientifically calls "dystrophy," the slow and sure wasting away of the prisoners through a systematically arranged deficiency of food and vitamins. In short, they are starved to death cheaply and without noise.

When I discussed these camps with sincerely convinced German Communists, their usual reaction was that the inmates were merely saboteurs and asocial elements, and that they were not treated badly. The death figures were either dismissed as enemy propaganda, or excused as natural consequences of prison life ("Do you know that it's much worse in American prisons?" I was asked), or regretted as one of those things that are unavoidable in, yet secondary to, a great social transformation. ("You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs.")

Approximately 1,000 East German refugees arrive daily in the "decadent" West, fleeing the long knives of "progress."

WITH violence against the body there goes terror against the mind. To fence off the minds of East Germans from contamination by the West, the Communists have invented a new ideological crime, the so-called crime of "objectivism."

"If we have a bottle marked 'cyanide,'" said East Berlin's Municipal Education Director, Ernst Wildangel, "everybody believes us, and nobody wants to first taste and make sure it's really cyanide, or he would be dead. But, as concerns the products of Western thought, everyone wants to taste them first, and after a person has done so, it's too late: he is lost." The sordid crime of "objectivism," punishable by re-education in a labor camp and expulsion from the party, can be committed by reading a Western newspaper or listening to a Western broadcast; the culprit may even be a convinced Communist who only wants to hear what the enemy says so as to be better able to fight him—that does not matter. "True objectivity" can only be found in the works and words of Marxism-Leninism; its contradiction, "objectivism," is a Western capitalist trick to poison the mind.

At present, the theory of "objectivism" underlies all education, which is nothing but a political assault against the main enemy—the open mind—and a political instrument for producing "planned men [*Planmenschen*]

after the Soviet pattern," to quote a recent speech of the East German foreign trade minister, Georg Handtke.

Every student has to go through "political education"; and all education is politicized. Professors who do not belong to the SED or one of the mass auxiliaries have been fired, except for a small number of specialists who are still used *pro tem*.^{*} Special Communist commissioners grill university students before every term; those who turn out to be "ideologically intolerable" are sent to the local labor exchange to be drafted for a labor project. Approximately one-third of the student body consists of the so-called "worker and peasant students" who are "delegated" by the party to the universities and forced to study there; in 1949, 3,260 Communist Youth were ordered to study; in 1950 their number was increased to 4,000.[†] They receive scholarships which are graduated upwards, like Stakhanovite wages, according to their political enthusiasm. In addition they, as well as other students, get a medal, "For Good Knowledge," if they come out well in the political examinations. They must always be uniformed in blue shirts. Some of them are political functionaries commissioned to spy on their fellow students and professors; they have to keep the "development files" (*Entwicklungskarteien*) in which the behavior of every student and professor is recorded in detail, as well as the questionnaires which students and professors have to fill in and which leave no question unasked.

"Whatever the field of study, our main subject is the fight for the Marxist-dialectical materialist school of thought against the claptrap of the decadent West, such as so-called idealistic philosophy," the State Secretary for Higher Education said in a speech. The new dean of Halle University's philosophy department, the "professor of dialectical

^{*}Most of the famous professors who were fired from the Eastern universities succeeded in fleeing to the West; for instance, Berlin's Nicolai Hartmann (recently deceased), Eduard Spranger, and Erich Hochstetter; Leipzig's Theodor Litt, Hans Georg Gadamer, and Alfred Petzeld; Jena's Hans Leisegang and Max Bense—to name just a few from the field of philosophy.

[†]According to plan, in five years from now the whole student body is scheduled to consist only of such Communist-delegated "worker and peasant students."

and historical materialism," Dr. Mende, delegated to the post by the SED, put it even more coarsely: "There are still idiots around who in this 20th century are interested in idealistic philosophy, and what makes it worse, some of them are still allowed to walk about freely." He implied what everyone knows: they will not be walking around much longer.

The enforced one-way education is not limited to *Geisteswissenschaften*; students of medicine—whose traditional doctorate has been abolished in favor of a state license—must undergo a political examination instead of the *Latinum*, the traditional first examination for future physicians. Fifteen hundred "progressive textbooks and primers" in 17 million volumes—most of them translations of Soviet Russian works—are to be printed and distributed in 1951, according to the Two Year Plan. Grade school children learn from them "the only correct concept" of life, as discovered by Soviet Professor Oparin: "Life has been created from matter in a purely materialistic way by the mixture of coacervate drops in the ocean with organic solutions."

In kindergartens where, according to official instructions, "the celebration of Christmas should be beautifully replaced by the celebration of Stalin's birthday," a Christmas play was prescribed with the following outline:

"First scene in America: White children torture Negro children.

"Second scene in England: Boy Scouts play war.

"Third scene: Children from Soviet Russia and Korea sing peace songs."

THE dictatorship, as always, focuses much of its effort on winning over the youth to its side, and it seems unhappily true that uniformed group life, with its marching and singing, of which there is as much in the Free German Youth as there was in the Hitler Youth, does indeed appeal to youngsters. With the same words used by Hitler youths to describe the good sides of the past—the *Kameradschaftsgeist* and the *Leistungsprinzip* of their old organization—enthusiastic Communist youths described to me these good sides of the present dictatorship.

The search for a meaning of existence larger than mere self-interest, and the wish

to do something for the community, which many youngsters genuinely and often painfully feel, are fully exploited by the Communists. In the name of Heroic Hennecke, Communist Germany's counterpart to Soviet Russia's Stakhanov, youngsters are continually driven to achieve incredible working performances. They sort 20,000 cigarettes per day, as did seventeen-year-old, blonde and pretty Communist Marga whose picture appeared for weeks in the Eastern press—experienced workers before had never sorted more than 14,000 a day; or they install twenty radio tubes per hour, as did the young Communist Reinhold who became an East German idol for out-installing his elders. This kind of "heroism" can strongly appeal to some youngsters. "It gives us a sense of social usefulness which no worker had before," one of them explained to me, when he told me of his harvest feats.

Those who fail to remain in the system's good graces must register as jobless, which automatically makes them draftees either for the People's Police with its military discipline or, what is worse, for labor in the uranium mines of Aue, Wismuth, and Joachimsthal. (This labor service should not be confused with the forced labor used in the same plants; the labor draftees are free to move about and are paid wages but cannot leave their jobs.)

The dictatorship is also generous in handing out bribes and rewards to its youthful followers. And since those who refuse to cooperate forfeit their right to higher education or specialized training, their chances to make a living, and also their sense of personal belongingness, the regime may yet succeed in gaining the overt allegiance of a majority and the inner allegiance of a minority, for the time at least.

It may be safely assumed that there are more sincere supporters of the Soviet system in the age group under twenty-five than among any other group. While most Eastern Germans estimated the ratio of "true Communists" in the total population at "less than 5 per cent," with an occasional answer of "less than 10 per cent," the estimates of young people were higher. Among the members of the Free German Youth with whom I discussed the proportion of "real Communists" in their group, replies varied from 10 to 25 per cent. Among the

students of the universities of Halle, Leipzig, Greifswald, Jena, and Rostock, the proportion of 20 per cent was given with amazing unanimity.

But if the Communists have won most of their adherents from the youth, it is also from the youth that there comes most of the decided opposition and resistance. Especially in the universities and some high schools, acts of resistance have continued on a large scale since they started in 1948 with the arrest, and the disappearance in a Russian camp, of Wolfgang Natonek, the young Jew who had survived a Nazi concentration camp to become president of the student council of the University of Leipzig, at which post he resisted the Communist claim to total control.

However, in the last two years, organized and open resistance has become more rare as the machine of state terror has perfected its operations.

Young East Germans who remain firm in their opposition to totalitarianism are today unsure what they can really achieve in the way of resistance besides telling their countrymen how bad the new order is, a fact which most already know. Open resistance today seems to them to be irresponsible, ineffective, and suicidal. What they mainly attempt to do is, first, to deflate the general fear of the police by individual acts of bravado and rebellion, such as painting "F" (for *Freiheit*) signs on house walls, distributing leaflets in public places, and so on; and, second, to hamper and frustrate dictatorial injustice in individual cases where they can help the victims.

The members of the new resistance have (in obvious contrast to many members of the old anti-Nazi underground) no moral reluctance at joining the Communist organizations to obstruct from within; neither do they have moral scruples against close cooperation with foreign powers, since they are aware of the international character of their fate and their fight. Finally, we may take it as absolutely certain that active resistance against, and passive rejection of, the Communist state among the young is much more widespread than in the Nazi dictatorship.

It is strikingly significant how often the new dictatorship feels compelled to attack just those people previously persecuted by

the Nazi dictatorship. East Germany's prisons and labor camps are again being filled with the old foes of the Nazis—Social Democrats, pacifists, militant Christians. Even the members of Jehovah's Witnesses (in Germany called *Ernstes Bibelforscher*, "Serious Bible Researchers") are being hunted down again. Since the summer of 1950, the government has rounded up all the members of the sect, those who survived Hitler and those who joined up after Hitler; and, as was soon discovered, the Communist denunciations simply repeated those of the Nazis.

THE situation of the Jews in Soviet Germany is obviously different from what it was under Hitler. For one thing, there are very few Jews living in East Germany. Only East Berlin, Leipzig, and Dresden still have small Jewish communities, and their religious life has not yet been interfered with; several desecrations of Jewish cemeteries which were committed last year cannot in fairness be traced to the Communists. But occasionally Nazi anti-Semitic accents do creep into the denunciations of the West's "displaced persons," many of whom are refugees from Communist-controlled countries; the most blatant anti-Semitic attack of that kind was delivered by Anna Seghers, a Communist novelist, party hack, and writer, of West-German Jewish origin. Anti-Semitism also may rear its head in the attacks against the "cosmopolites" in cultural and political life. The *Taegliche Rundschau*, daily newspaper of the Soviet Occupation forces, commissioned Arnold Zweig, well-known, now near-blind, novelist (author of *The Case of Sergeant Grischa*), who returned from his exile in Tel Aviv to East Berlin after the war, to write the keynote attack against the "cosmopolitan" German writers. The order was quickly and suddenly canceled after Mr. Zweig delivered his piece and the editor was told by a secretary that its author "was a Jew himself." The desired article was written instead by Bodo Uhse, at present the Communist commissar of German writing—and "of purely Aryan descent," as the editor made certain before printing his article. The last Jewish editor of a Communist paper, Rudolf Feistmann, died last summer under very mysterious circumstances.

East Germans generally consider it a symptom of anti-Jewish discrimination that all

Communists of Jewish descent were suddenly and without explanation dropped from the list of candidates in the elections of 1950 and from the newly appointed party councils where they had, up to then, held high positions; among them were Gerhart Eisler, Minister of Information and Propaganda; Hilde Benjamin, State Secretary of Justice and leading prosecutor of the "show" trials; Juergen Kuczinsky, labor economist; Walter Victor, State Secretary of Information in Saxony. Since, however, they only suffered the same fate as those non-Jewish Communists who had spent their years of emigration in the West and were suspected of being tainted with Western influence, it is not clear how valid the popular impression of anti-Semitism may be. But it is a fact that—in contrast to the years 1945 to 1948—no person of Jewish descent any longer holds an influential position in the East German Communist hierarchy.

CULTURE, of course, is being corseted along "progressive" lines; the finished contours nevertheless have a strangely familiar appearance.

"It doesn't matter at all," asserted a speaker at the East German Writers' Congress in Berlin last July, "whether one of our young writers happens to make mistakes of grammar and to confuse the *mir* and the *mich*, the dative and the accusative, so long as his work shows a progressive ideology." "The literary artist," another speaker said to great applause, "is a dangerous man who usually loves the words and hates the people, as shown from Goethe to Sartre." The Writers' Congress adopted unanimously a resolution recommending as the greatest writer of all ages Mr. Stalin, "the author of genius, the creator of the language spoken today by eight hundred million people." Of those who applauded the resolution, some had been prisoners in Himmler's concentration camps, some had been high officials in Goebbels' propaganda ministry ten years ago.

In their attempt to produce the *Plan-mensch*, Communist and Nazi totalitarian cultures come more and more to resemble each other. The Nazis' aversion to advanced art, which psychoanalyzing commentators blamed on the Fuehrer's personal past as a painter of conventional picture postcards, is again common with the Communists, who

have outlawed all art not exhibiting "socialist realism," including the art of Pablo Picasso. And the Communists in East Germany show the same mania for new, monumental, giant-spaced party buildings as did the Nazis: Berlin's Schlossplatz, the Lustgarten, and the Royal Prussian castles were recently dynamited to provide a huge meeting place on the Moscow pattern, but also recalling Hitler's Nuremberg *Parteitagsgelaende*.

Even the jokes current in East Germany are the same as jokes told a decade ago, with the Communists now simply replacing the Nazis. All the clowns, masters of ceremonies, and entertainers of the few drab remaining night clubs were called, in October, to a week of "political education" since "their jokes were frequently not up to our times, some of them actually being directed against socialist reconstruction rather than Western decadence." The last humor magazine, the *Ulenspiegel*, was suppressed last summer; its satires on the West had made the West more tempting than repulsive to the Eastern readers.

After the Nazis had fallen, German youth pounced enthusiastically upon jazz music and American dances, which the Nazis had forbidden as "mongrel race" culture. Now the Communists have again forbidden "hot music" and American dances as Western-capitalist poison; the young Easterners come secretly to the West to dance the samba and rhumba. The Communists have tabooed Hollywood films, as did the Nazis, and they are reissuing the same magazine of anti-American propaganda which the Nazis published in wartime, with the same contents and the same slogans. They are even publishing an anti-Western newsweekly which is called—name of names!—*Der Neue Stuermer*.

THERE are, however, differences between Nazi and Communist rule in Germany as fundamental and conspicuous as their many affinities. The first, rather obvious and probably least significant, difference consists in the fact that the nationalistic appeal of the Third Reich has given way to a new, supernatural appeal. Rather than the superiority of all things German, the new dictatorship proclaims the absolute superiority of the movement of progressive, "Marxist-Leninist internationalism," in which "the great Russian people" is leading, and Germany is only

a modest, latecoming pupil. The pupil, of course, has to pay a fee, which in the summer of 1950 took the form of an agreement between the leaders of Communist Germany and of Communist Poland, in which the Germans renounced forever the German territory east of the Oder-Neisse line which the Poles had annexed after the war. To most Germans, even to most German Communists, this looked suspiciously like nationalist spoliation rather than "internationalism."

A second and, I believe, more decisive difference is that Communism is Germany's second experience with a dictatorship, a repeat performance of totalitarian rule, and that the Communist dictatorship in Germany was from its very beginnings based on force alone, while Nazism was borne by the consent of at least a substantial minority, perhaps a majority of the people. The loss of the war disillusioned the Germans with totalitarianism; the ruthlessness of the new Communist government has largely prevented any new illusions being born.

As a matter of fact, it can be observed that the most convinced anti-Nazis are also most active in the anti-Communist resistance, while the ex-Nazis themselves have joined forces with the Communists and actively cooperate in their system, and the fellow-travelers of the Nazis have turned into fellow-travelers of the Communists. The tragedy of the Nazi dictatorship even effected a catharsis among many Germans: "We do not want to be guilty again of crimes committed in our name while we silently stand by," a number of resistants told me in describing their motives for active anti-Communist resistance.

The large majority of East Germans form that only too frequent modern community where a general inner dissent from, and rejection of, the government is veiled by outward consent and loyalty gained through blackmail and terror. Much as people hate and reject the dictatorship, they fear it in the first place. While they cannot liberate themselves, they do want liberty. They can be counted on to fight with the West against Soviet totalitarianism to a far greater extent than they assisted the struggle against the Nazis—if. . . .

The "if" is, of course, a big one; if we know how to encourage this latent opposition, cooperate with it, and, above all, find

means of aiding the nuclei of active resistance which do exist. Although this country has a special stake in this new resistance behind the Iron Curtain, it is not alerted to, and hardly aware of, its existence, its desperate struggle, its aspirations which coincide very much with our aspirations. Instead, public opinion in the West—and especially American liberal opinion!—has allowed itself to be corrupted by Soviet propaganda.

"AMERICAN" is, in East Germany, an official smear-word. The children in kindergarten, the highbrows who read *Die USA in Wort und Bild*, a cultural magazine devoted exclusively to defamation of this country, the movie, radio, and theater audiences, the semi-illiterate peasants—all have it constantly dinned in their ears that their despicable enemy is America, which, if they are to survive, they must defeat. The effect that this incessant pattern of propaganda has on the East Germans is far from living up to Soviet expectations. But its impact on the people of the West probably exceeds the Communists' most fervent hopes.

The "hate America" campaign, and especially the blaming of the loss of German unity on "American disrupters and their West German lackeys," has become a significant factor in West German politics. It acts as a form of ideological blackmail, spurring the West German politicians to strike nationalist poses and to assert belligerently their independence from the West. That the East Germans who talk most vociferously about national unity and independence are themselves spineless lackeys of the Russian dictatorship, everyone knows. But so effective has the technique of the Big Lie become in our day, that even those who know it for a lie feel constrained to act as if it could only be refuted by first accepting it as the truth.

The most lucid example of how Soviet propaganda does its job is in the problems encountered in the rearming of West Germany. It should be obvious to a child that the military potential of Western Europe—including the proposed German divisions—could not even begin to constitute a military threat to Russia. But by a stubborn and flagrant slandering of America's intentions in Europe, Soviet propaganda has convinced many that it represents exactly such an aggressive threat. And since West Germany is a

free country, whose constitution guarantees the right of the individual to refuse to bear arms, Western plans for the defense of Europe can be hindered if not balked. Meanwhile, in terrorized East Germany, the *Bereitschaften* of the "People's Police" are being quietly and efficiently built up as a miniature elite armed force.

EAST GERMANY is also the sounding board for Soviet charges of a wholesale "revival of Nazism" in West Germany—charges which are piously repeated by American liberals, perhaps for little reason other than that they are by now so familiar that it is hard to believe they can be largely false. There are, of course, ex-Nazis in industrial and governmental posts in the West, but they are distinctly outnumbered by their counterparts in the East. The most fervid nationalists in West Germany—the ex-officers of the *Bruderschaft* and the Lutherans around Hessian Church President Martin Niemoeller—have a marked pro-Soviet orientation. And it is in East Germany that the Nazi generals are installed once again, bearing their old titles and authority. By shrieking about the fictitious revival of totalitarianism in the West, the Soviets have succeeded in diverting attention from the very real totalitarianism that actually exists in the East. Indeed, they have succeeded to such an extent that when one picks up an American periodical with an article on "the German problem," one can be sure of reading detailed accounts of the desecration of a Jewish cemetery by a few hoodlums in the Western Zone, or of a pro-Nazi speech by some minor West German official, with seldom a word about the thriving and bloody totalitarianism in the Eastern Zone.

Fortunately, in East Germany itself, the

average citizen is somewhat less credulous than is the "expert" Alvarez del Vayo in the pages of the *Nation*. The chief reason for this is in the character of Soviet rule itself—from the lootings, rapings, and mass murders by Russian soldiers to the legalized and continuous robbery of East Germany by Russia under the guise of dismantling and reparations. Indeed, East Germany presents an exceptionally promising but so far scarcely used opportunity for this country to penetrate the Iron Curtain and to carry its message effectively to the peoples under Soviet rule. Bordering directly on the West, the inhabitants of East Germany are able to compare Soviet propaganda with the facts as they know them at first hand. Then, too, in the very midst of Soviet Germany there lies West Berlin, a dagger pointing to the heart of the Communist body politic: when tens of thousands of East Germans recently voted against their regime in the only way possible—by sending the stubs of their ration cards to be counted in the Western Zone—they demonstrated their true sentiments quite unequivocally. Were the West less anxious about the mote in its own eye, and more explicit about the beam in the eye of its enemy; were the West less worried about "containment" and more willing to take the ideological offensive, seeking support among the victims of Communist terror—the response would, in this writer's opinion, exceed every optimistic calculation.

The defense of the West cannot merely mean more and more soldiers sitting on their weapons. It must also mean something more positive—in short, it must mean the promise of eventual liberation. Such promises, made in good faith, and with actions to back them up, can be the equivalent of some dozens of infantry divisions.